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Virginia Law Day 1979



The Virginia State Bar
The Virginia Bar Association
The Marshall-Wythe School of Law

The College of William and Mary
Williamsburg, Virginia

Phi Beta Kappa Hall
Williamsburg, Virginia

2 p.m.

LAW DAY EXERCISES

William and Mary Brass Ensemble

Charles R. Varner
Director

The National Anthem

Invocation

The Reverend M. Dana Hunt
Williamsburg United Methodist Church

Opening Remarks

William B. Spong, Jr.
Dean, Marshall-Wythe School of Law

Introduction of Speaker

R. Harvey Chappell, Jr.
*Board of Governors
American Bar Association*

Law Day Address

S. Shepherd Tate
President, American Bar Association

Unveiling of the Portrait
of George Wythe

Mrs. Robert Friend Boyd

Closing Remarks

Dean Spong

Benediction

Mr. Hunt

The seal on the cover of the Law Day program was designed by Melford J. Leblanc of Petersburg, Va., for use during the observance of the Bicentennial of American Legal Education at the College of William and Mary. Mr. Leblanc's daughter is a second year law student at the Marshall-Wythe School of Law.

LAW DAY 1979

Today's Law Day program, which is sponsored by the Virginia State Bar, the Virginia Bar Association, and the Marshall-Wythe School of Law, is one of an estimated 50,000 law day programs and other observances held on or near May 1 each year.

Law Day was conceived in 1957 by Charles S. Rhyne, an attorney from Washington, D.C., who was president of the American Bar Association. In 1958, President Eisenhower by proclamation established Law Day, and Congress, by joint resolution, set aside May 1 as a "special day of celebration by the American people in appreciation of their liberties and the reaffirmation of their loyalty to the United States of America."

The purpose of Law Day is to advance equality and justice under law; to encourage citizen support of law observance and law enforcement; and to foster respect for law and an understanding of its essential place in the life of every citizen in the United States. It is sponsored by the American Bar Association in cooperation with 800 state and local bar associations and the support of many national associations.

S. SHEPHERD TATE

Mr. Tate, a member of the Memphis law firm of Martin, Tate, Morrow & Marston, P.C., was elected to a one-year term as President of the American Bar Association at the ABA's annual meeting in New York City on August 10, 1978.

A former president of the Tennessee Bar Association, Mr. Tate served as a delegate to the 250,000-member ABA from 1968 to 1977. In 1977, he headed the ABA's task force on lawyer advertising; he is a past chairman of the ABA's standing committee on scope and correlation of work and past co-chairman of the joint committee on professional discipline of the ABA's Judicial Administration Division's Appellate Judges Conference. From 1973 to 1976, Mr. Tate was chairman of the ABA standing committee on professional discipline.

Mr. Tate received his B.A. degree in economics from Southwestern at Memphis and his J.D. degree from the University of Virginia. He has been admitted to practice in both Virginia and Tennessee, among other states.

GEORGE WYTHE

"Especially fleeting is that fame which comes to members of the bar," noted Oscar Lane Shewmake in an address given over fifty years ago to honor George Wythe's memory. As Judge Shewmake rightly noted, for many Wythe is but dimly remembered for his contributions to colonial America as a lawyer, teacher, jurist and statesman.

In Williamsburg, however, George Wythe lives on, for it is here that he made his mark as a man of exceptional character and brilliant teaching ability. Thomas Jefferson, in his autobiography, wrote of him as "my faithful and beloved mentor in youth, and my most affectionate friend through life." Jefferson's reverence for Wythe was shared by the other students whom Wythe guided through law study, including James Monroe, John Marshall, Henry Clay and Edmund Randolph.

Jefferson, as Governor of Virginia, chose Wythe to become the first professor of law at the College of William and Mary. He could have made no better choice. Wythe's profound understanding of the principles of law and their relevance to the human condition made him a teacher of rare quality. Even his adversaries at the bar admitted that his integrity was beyond question and that his scholarly command of legal principles was unexcelled.

Wythe served his nation as ably as he served the College. He was a delegate to the House of Burgesses, a member of the Continental Congress, and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Wythe helped to frame the Constitution for Virginia, and was instrumental in the work of drafting the Federal Constitution. Wythe's work, with Jefferson and Edmund Pendleton, in revising and adopting a new code of laws for the Commonwealth in 1779 remains one of the great scholarly achievements in American legal history.

As much as Wythe gave to his state and his nation, he resisted all invitations by President Washington to accept a post with the new government. Instead Wythe continued to sit, until his death, as Judge of the High Court of Chancery. He was recognized as the most learned judge in Virginia.

The College conferred upon him the honorary degree of LL.D. in 1790, and honors him still.

THE GEORGE WYTHE PORTRAIT

The Honorable Lewis A. McMurrin, Chairman of the Virginia Bicentennial Commission, helped plan the events being held during 1979 that commemorate establishment of the first chair of law in the United States at William and Mary. Mr. McMurrin, at the early planning meetings, expressed concern that insufficient recognition had been given George Wythe and suggested that an appropriate painting of George Wythe be placed on display in the new Marshall-Wythe law building. He inspired the artist and the donors, arranging for the painting and gift of a new portrait of George Wythe.

The portrait of George Wythe unveiled today at Law Day is a gift to the College from Mr. and Mrs. Robert Friend Boyd. Mr. Boyd is a Norfolk attorney and 1952 graduate of the Marshall-Wythe School of Law. Mrs. Boyd, the former Sara Grace Miller, is a 1955 graduate of the College.

Although Wythe served as the first professor of law in America and taught Thomas Jefferson, few materials existed on which the artist, Mr. David Silvette of Richmond, could base his rendition. In fact, there are no pictures available of Wythe as a young man. As a result, the portrait of Wythe is perhaps the first interpretation of him as a young man, based on Mr. Silvette's exhaustive research of existing portraits and photographs of Wythe in his later years.

The portrait of George Wythe will hang in the foyer of the new law school building.